PUBLIC OPINION

IN POLAND ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN Department of Public Information commissioned a public opinion poll in Poland in December 1989 to assess the awareness, knowledge and image of the UN.

THE RESULTS IN BRIEF

- Most Poles have heard of the UN; half know enough about it to identify its current Secretary-General; and about a quarter of them can name a UN institution.
- Poles giving an opinion generally have a good impression of UN performance.
- Peace and security is the international issue of greatest interest to Poles.

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UN

Eighty-nine per cent of Poles have heard of the UN. Awareness was highest (100 per cent) among white collar workers with higher education, and relatively low among unskilled workers (70 per cent). Regular readers of political news were also much more likely to be aware of the UN than non-readers (96 per cent compared to 77 per cent).

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

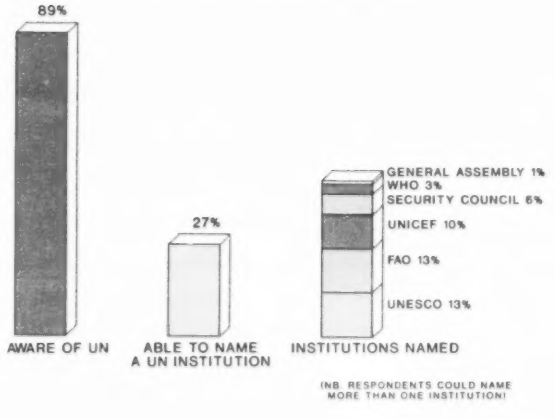

FIGURE 1

Twenty-seven per cent of Poles could name a UN institution. UNESCO and FAO were the most well-known, followed by UNICEF, the Security Council, WHO and the General Assembly. Two per cent cited peace-keeping forces in general. Other UN bodies were mentioned by less than one per cent or not at all. Fourteen per cent knew enough about the UN to name more than one UN-related body. Knowledge of UN institutions increased substantially with education.

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IDENTIFYING UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

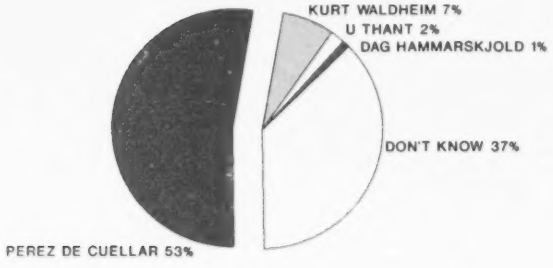


FIGURE 2

UN PERFORMANCE RATING

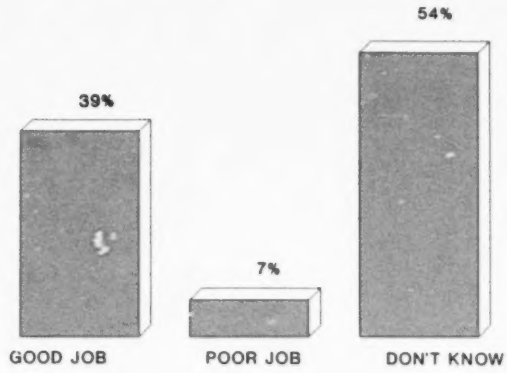


FIGURE 3

IDENTIFICATION OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Asked to identify the current Secretary-General from a list of five Secretaries-General since 1945, 53 per cent correctly named Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

Those able to identify him were, in particular, people with higher education (80 per cent); those very interested in international politics (76 per cent); regular readers of political news (75 per cent); and those who had been taught about the UN at school (74 per cent). More than four out of five Poles who could name a UN institution also identified the current Secretary-General.

RATING UN PERFORMANCE

Poles' outlook on UN performance was largely positive. Thirty-nine per cent considered it was doing a good job compared to seven per cent who said it was doing a poor job.

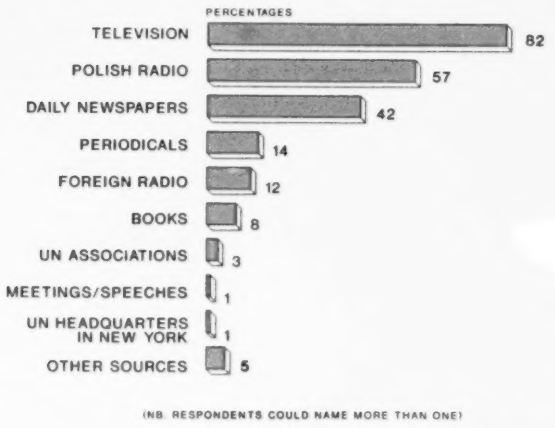
All population groups in Poland were more positive than negative about UN performance. People whose impressions were particularly positive had a profile similar to those knowledgeable about the UN.

Over half of all Poles did not venture an opinion as to whether the UN was doing a good or a poor job. Among those least likely to express an opinion were people who did not follow political news on television or in the newspapers.

REASONS FOR UN PERFORMANCE RATING

Twenty-five per cent of those who believed the UN was doing a good job said it was keeping peace in the world. Seventeen per cent cited the UN's role in regional conflicts, 12 per cent specifying the Arab-Israeli conflict. Reducing nuclear arms, human rights and Iran-Iraq were also given as examples for positive ratings.

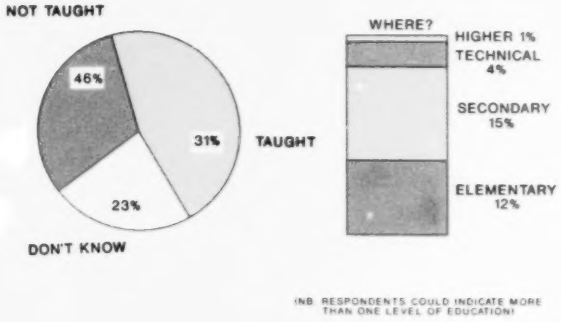
SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE UN



(NB. RESPONDENTS COULD NAME MORE THAN ONE)

FIGURE 4

TEACHING ABOUT THE UN



(NB. RESPONDENTS COULD INDICATE MORE THAN ONE LEVEL OF EDUCATION)

FIGURE 5

The UN's role in famine relief was prominent, with 20 per cent citing it as a reason. Activities in the Third World, disaster relief, improving the environment, providing health assistance and helping children were also mentioned.

The seven per cent who felt the UN was doing a poor job said that the UN was not effective, did not have power, and that there were still wars in the world.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Four out of five Poles cited television as their main source of information about the UN, followed by Polish radio, daily newspapers, periodicals, foreign radio and books. All other sources scored four per cent or less. Poles who cited periodicals, books, foreign radio and the daily press were better informed about the UN than those using other sources. Ten per cent said they had seen, read or heard something about the UN in the media during the previous month (November 1989).

About one third of Poles indicated they had been taught about the UN at school—mainly at elementary and secondary levels.

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

Poles chose international peace and security as the issue they would most like to receive information about. Other popular issues were the environment, disarmament and human rights. Seven per cent of Poles said they were very interested in knowing more about the work of the UN in general.

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

	VERY INTERESTED %	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED %	NOT INTERESTED %
INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY	50	39	10
ENVIRONMENT	45	39	15
DISARMAMENT	45	38	16
HUMAN RIGHTS	41	42	17
CHILDREN'S ISSUES	39	43	18
WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS	36	46	18
AIDS	33	41	26
DRUG ABUSE	32	41	26
CRIME PREVENTION	31	42	27
REFUGEES & DISASTER RELIEF	29	47	24
IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS	24	38	38
INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS	23	43	33
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	21	48	31
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	20	43	37
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT	19	43	38
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	17	37	46
POPULATION ISSUES	14	38	48
NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER	12	30	58
INTERNATIONAL LAW & TREATIES	9	32	59
APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	9	29	62
THE WORK OF THE UN IN GENERAL	7	39	54
DECOLONIZATION	7	22	71
AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY	6	24	70
BRINGING INDEP. TO NAMIBIA	5	21	73

(NB: SOME RESPONDENTS INDICATED "DON'T KNOW" OR GAVE NO ANSWER TO SOME OF THE ISSUES)

FIGURE 6

CONCLUSION

The UN Secretary-General is quite well known in Poland and the role that the UN plays in international peace and security seems generally recognised and respected by many Poles. People who were well-informed and had been taught about the UN were also more likely to have a favourable opinion about its performance.

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

The poll was conducted in Poland by the *Osrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej of Polish Radio and Television* which interviewed a nationwide representative sample of 1,876 men and women aged 15 years and over. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes during the periods 4-5th and 11-12th December 1989. The results have a margin of sampling error of ± 3 per cent.

The Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the UN Department of Public Information undertakes public opinion polls to "analyse trends of opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured". General Assembly resolution 13 (1), paragraph 13, Annex 1 of 13 February 1946.

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